

THE ADMINISTRATION OF STATE AID FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

REPORT OF A SERIES OF CONFERENCES OF STATE OFFICIALS HELD
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE
PROMOTION OF INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION.

WILLIAM T. BAWDEN.

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THE movement for vocational education seems to have passed thru a period in which the chief concern has been the securing of desired legislation. A great deal of effort has been directed toward influencing the Congress at Washington, the state legislatures in the several states, and boards of education and other agencies in numerous cities, with the result of securing, not all the legislation that has been sought, but sufficient to afford ample opportunity for the organization of a considerable variety of schools, and for perhaps all the experimentation that the country is at present prepared to conduct and supervise adequately.

Consequently the authorities in various states and cities are now face to face with real problems of organization and administration, as distinguished from those of planning and projecting on paper for the purpose of influencing public opinion or convincing legislators.

Legislation in seven states has created groups of officials charged with the duty of interpreting and administering a body of laws dealing with vocational education, and without question a number of other states will follow with similar legislation during the next two or three years. Wisconsin is working on a plan which provides control of industrial schools or departments by boards which are nominally separate from the existing boards of education but which evidently contemplates close cooperation between existing school boards and the special boards. Connecticut has adopted a plan by which the special schools may be organized and supported by the state independently of local initiative or control; or schools may be organized and supported by local initiative, assisted by state grants. These two plans have certain other features in common with those of other states, but in the respects mentioned they are unique among the schemes which have been enacted into legislation.

On the other hand, there are five states in which the legislation has been passed on substantially the same underlying principles, so that there is considerable uniformity in the provisions of the laws, and opportunity for cooperation between those charged with the duties of administration. These five states are: Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Indiana.

Foreseeing the possibility and desirability of cooperation and mutual understanding among the officials in all of the states dealing with these problems, the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education, thru its secretary, Charles A. Prosser, has been conducting a series of conferences of the officials from these states for the purpose of making an intensive study of the provisions of the laws and of the problems of appropriate interpretation and effective administration. The first of these conferences was held in May, 1913, at the Goodhue estate of the Children's Aid Society, Staten Island, N. Y.; the second was held in connection with the annual convention of the National Society at Grand Rapids, Michigan, in October, 1913; the third, and most largely attended conference was held at Staten Island December 12 and 13th, 1913.

At this last conference there were 33 men present representing ten states and the Dominion of Canada. The states represented included New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Connecticut, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Missouri, and Illinois.

COMMITTEE ON NOMENCLATURE.

One of the important questions which has been before the conference is the formulation of definitions of the important words and phrases that have come into widespread use in connection with the movement for vocational education. A committee which has been at work upon this problem for some time presented a preliminary report. The conference decided, however, that it is not yet ready to announce conclusions reached, but directed the committee to continue its work and report at a later meeting. Two definitions were tentatively agreed upon:

Vocational Education. Vocational education as defined in the laws of Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Indiana, and as provided for in that of New York, is that form of education whose controlling purpose is to fit for useful and efficient service in agriculture, trades, and industries, or occupations connected with the household, and which is given to the individual who has already indicated an occupational aim in life, which aim this particular form of training is designed to meet.

Practical Arts—Industrial Arts. Practical arts, or industrial arts, is a part of general education consisting of series of activity experiences carried on thru the medium of handwork (including manual training, shopwork, drawing, school and home gardening, household arts) designed to assist the individual to an appreciation of the means and methods by which society accomplishes its work. In the later stages of this process (as the individual approaches adolescence) this work becomes prevocational education, in that it may serve to assist the individual to define a vocational purpose in life, by affording a basis for an intelligent choice thru the variety of experiences offered.

There are several important points that should be noted in connection with these attempts at definition:

1. It should not escape the notice of the reader that the definition of vocational education is a qualified definition—"as defined in the laws" of these states. No member of the conference probably would hold that the statement, without the qualifications, is a complete definition of vocational education.

2. There is no implication that other forms of vocational education, or even other kinds of school activity, are not equally valuable both to the state and to the individual child. The state simply selects certain forms of education, and proposes to aid communities which will comply with certain prescribed regulations.

3. Emphasis upon the distinction between vocational education and practical arts or manual training implies no criticism of the latter as such. The attitude of the state administration toward all forms of handwork, intelligently carried on in the schools, is entirely sympathetic and helpful. Altho the two things are distinct, there should be no antagonism between them.

4. There are the very best of reasons for limiting this kind of legislation at present. In the first place, it may be said that the primary purpose is to aid those types of educational effort which will not be attempted without such aid. Special aid for commercial education may, therefore, be omitted on the ground that it is already fairly well established. Second, the field of vocational education is so broad that it would be folly to attempt to cover it thoroly from the start. It would be impossible either to finance such an undertaking, or to find men and women to direct it. After careful deliberation certain forms of work have been selected and a beginning made. The question is not, therefore, as to whether the proposals completely meet the situation, but as to whether they are practicable, and in general likely to meet a larger need than others that might have been adopted. Third, another reason for the present neglect of commercial education in this legislation is found in the decision to make the beginning with training for productive as contrasted with distributive employments.

5. Finally, it is necessary to distinguish clearly between two types of work for women and girls as provided for in these laws: (1) Trade extension work, in which girls are trained for increased efficiency in various occupations in which they are now employed, or into which they propose to enter, and by which they expect to earn a livelihood;

and (2) Training in preparation for homemaking and motherhood, designed for girls and women however employed at present.

Another one of the difficulties confronting the committee on nomenclature was the formulation of a satisfactory definition of a skilled occupation. In view of the evolution now going on in the industrial world there are those who insist that the term "skilled occupation" is fast becoming a misnomer. It was proposed, for the purpose of discussion, that any occupation be regarded as a skilled occupation which meets these three conditions:

(1) Provision of a living wage for the worker.

(2) A content which offers the possibility of differences in the quality of the work turned out.

(3) Provision for promotion, by constituting one of a series of progressive steps in the industry leading to something better.

STANDARDS AND PROCEDURE.

Another committee that is engaged in an important piece of work is the Committee on Standards and Procedure in the Inspection, Supervision, and Approval of State Aided Vocational Schools. This committee presented a preliminary report and received instructions to continue its work and report at a later meeting. The work of this committee involves a study of the methods employed in the various states in dealing with schools, the official relations maintained between state and community, methods of indicating approval of work undertaken by the community, qualifications demanded of pupils admitted to the schools, qualifications and certification of teachers, courses of study, equipment, school records, etc. When this study has been completed it will be possible for one to determine readily in what respects there is uniformity in the different states, and in what respects there is divergence in principle and practice; in what respects uniformity is desirable, or undesirable. A comparative study of the practices in the various states in dealing with any specific problem should prove of great value to the officials in any state when a question arises as to the best method of procedure.

One of the sessions of the conference was divided into two round-tables, one of which discussed topics of especial interest to officials having charge of the administration of agricultural education, and the other dealt with problems of industrial education. In the former the following topics were considered, among others:

"Relation of schools of agriculture to other agencies interested in agriculture," "The use of land in connection with schools of agriculture," "Short winter courses," "High school science and agriculture," "Courses in elementary agriculture."

The topics considered in the industrial education conference included the following: "The compulsory continuation school," "The voluntary continuation school," "The general improvement continuation school," "The trade extension continuation school." It seemed to be difficult to reach a consensus of opinion as to the proper field of effort for the continuation school, but for purposes of discussion it was proposed that continuation school work for the years 14 to 16 may legitimately include the following lines of effort:

(1) General improvement; courses intended to contribute to the development of general intelligence, citizenship, etc.

(2) Trade extension work; when the conditions are such that this is desirable or possible.

(3) Vocational training for an occupation in which the pupil may not now be engaged; when it is possible to make the proposed training sufficiently intensive to accomplish the desired end.

It is not proposed that every continuation school shall necessarily cover all three of these lines of effort, but when the conditions warrant it, all of them are to be regarded as legitimate.

One session was devoted to a discussion of the problems of the business of homemaking, the possibilities of courses that might be offered in day vocational schools, continuation schools, and evening schools, the selection and training of teachers, and kindred topics.

PLANS BASED ON STUDY OF CONDITIONS.

Plans for vocational education in the typical small community of less than two thousand inhabitants served as the basis for discussion at one interesting session. Small communities were classified into three groups: (1) Communities that have a dominant industry; (2) Communities that are wholly agricultural; (3) Communities that are neither entirely industrial nor agricultural, but mixed.

It was insisted that the essential facts must be known with reference to the industries of any community before much progress can be made in the development of plans for vocational education. The futility of spending large sums of money, for example, in training boys to be

machinists in a section of the state possessing practically no machine-shops has not always been clearly seen.

Attention was called to the recently published "Industrial Directory of New York," as a method of getting at the facts with reference to the occupations carried on in individual communities. This report was prepared under the direction of John Williams, Commissioner of Labor, and published by the New York State Department of Labor, Albany. It is divided into three parts: (1) Description of cities and villages having a population of 1,000 or more, with special reference to features of importance from the standpoint of industrial organization. (2) Tables showing conditions relative to population, agriculture, banking, manufacturing, factories, factory employes, and hours of labor. (3) Register of factories, listing the name, street address, product, and number of employes of each of the large factories in the different communities of the state.

The following statements were presented as typical items of information culled from the report, and bearing on the questions under consideration: Only about five per cent of the working people in the state of New York are found in communities of less than 2,000 inhabitants. There are only 42 towns and cities in the state having a dominant industry employing 100 or more workers. There is only one *small community* in New York having woodworking as a dominant industry employing 100 or more workers.

JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 5, NOW BEFORE CONGRESS.

In discussing the topic of Federal grants for vocational education, the conference passed unanimously the following resolution:

WHEREAS, The subject of national aid for vocational education is now before Congress for consideration, and

WHEREAS, Said subject is of the gravest importance to the nation collectively and the large masses of individuals in all parts of the country, and

WHEREAS, The measure raises a wide range of questions, both as to the scope of vocational education involved, and the administration of the aid to be extended by the nation, and

WHEREAS, It is of vital importance to the success of any plan for such aid that all interests concerned shall be unified thru full knowledge of all facts bearing on the problem in hand, and thru the exercise of the highest wisdom obtainable in the formulation of a plan that may commend itself to the judgment of all the people, and

WHEREAS, This Council, composed of state officials from thirteen states on whom devolve the duty of dealing with the administration of vocational educa-

tion, is interested only in the adoption of a plan that will most assuredly and expeditiously bring about the establishment of a system of education that will stimulate our industrial life, and will give to the masses of our people greater communal efficiency and a higher individual plane of living;

THEREFORE, *Be it Resolved*: By this Council that it heartily approves and earnestly urges the passage of the Resolution now before Congress, as follows:

Resolved by the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States of America, in Congress Assembled.

Section No. 1. That the President of the United States is hereby authorized to appoint a Commission of nine persons whose duty it shall be to consider the need and report a plan no later than December 1st, or as soon thereafter as possible, for national aid for vocational education.

Section No. 2. That the members of said Commission shall be paid for their actual traveling expenses and subsistence while engaged by the work of said Commission.

Section No. 3. That said Commission shall have authority to employ a secretary, and to make such investigations into local conditions in the respective States as may be necessary. The entire expense of the Commission not to exceed the sum of \$25,000.

Section No. 4. That the sum of \$25,000 be, and the same is, hereby appropriated to meet the expenses of the said Commission.

Before adjournment the members of the Conference completed arrangements for a fourth meeting at Richmond, Virginia, in connection with the annual convention of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association, in February, 1914.

PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE STATE DEPARTMENTS.

It may be profitable to summarize the practical results of the conferences which have been already held by stating the more pressing problems which are now confronting the officials in the various states who are charged with the administration of the laws, as the problems have been formulated in these discussions.

Interpretation of the Laws. As has been already indicated, the most immediate need is for an understanding of the laws themselves. In addition to the committee of the conference which is at work upon an analysis of the methods of procedure in the different states, there is a committee of the National Society at work upon a digest of the laws of all the states that have thus far dealt with the subject of vocational education.

Definition of Terms. The work of the committee on nomenclature should contribute to the economy of time in future discussions.

Directing and Informing Public Opinion. This is one of the

great tasks before the representatives of the state departments. It is not now so much a question of arousing public opinion, as it is of making sure that the popular interest in these matters is intelligent and focussed upon plans that are well thought out and programs that are practicable.

Selecting, Training, and Certifying Teachers. The urgency of the need for careful study of this problem has long been recognized, and substantial steps toward its solution have been taken by the National Society. At the recent convention in Grand Rapids a committee appointed for the purpose presented a preliminary report, which is to result later in a comprehensive report on the subject, with suggestions and recommendations in detail.

Preparation of Bulletins. Any scheme of administration of vocational education, to be effective, must involve the publication of a large amount of material in the way of explanation and interpretation of the law, rules and regulations derived from the authority of the law, practical suggestions to communities desiring help, outlines of courses of study, and other helps. In some of the more important states this work alone will soon assume proportions sufficient to demand the entire time of an expert. At present it constitutes a heavy burden on the departments in all of the states.

Cooperation Between the States. The necessity for cooperation has been recognized by the appointment of a committee, to which reference has been made, to make a special study of the problems.

These conferences are among the most important meetings that are being held at the present time. The conferees are men who are charged with great responsibility and are certain to wield a great influence; the problems discussed are of vital and immediate importance to each man present, as well as to countless individuals in the several states; and, perhaps most significant of all, the attendance at the conferences is small enough to permit full and free discussion, and the sessions are long enough to insure complete mutual understanding.

MEMBERS OF CONFERENCE ON STATE LEGISLATION
FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION.

Following is a list of names and addresses of those invited to participate in the Conference:

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Ross, W. D., State Supt. of Public Instruction, Topeka, Kans.

Harris, T. H., State Supt. of Public Instruction, Baton Rouge, La.

Hamlett, Barksdale, State Supt. of Public Instruction, Frankfort, Ky.

Smith, Payson, State Supt. of Public Schools, Augusta, Me.

Stephens, M. Bates, State Supt. of Public Education, Annapolis, Md.

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Schulz, C. G., State Supt. of Public Instruction, St. Paul, Minn.

Evans, Wm. P., State Supt. of Public Schools, Jefferson City, Mo.

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Miller, Frank W., State Commissioner of Public Instruction, Columbus, O.

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Stone, Mason S., State Supt. of Education, Montpelier, Vt.

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EDITORIAL

Interpretation of the Law Attention is given in another place to some of the problems of administration that are beginning to make themselves felt in certain states that have set up machinery for aiding communities in the support of vocational education. One of these problems, the interpretation of the law, and its exposition to the public, is likely to prove no light task. The following case may be cited as an example of the difficulties that arise. A certain city proposes to arrange continuation school classes for a group of telegraph messenger boys, grocery wagon boys, ushers from a theater, and bell-boys from a hotel. What subjects may be taught in such classes and yet meet with the approval of the inspector as coming within the meaning of "supplementary to the practical work, etc." of the occupations of these boys, and thus be eligible for state aid?

The clause in the law relating to part-time or continuation schools reads as follows:

Instruction shall be given in the trades and in industrial, agricultural, and homemaking subjects, and shall be open to pupils over fourteen years of age who are regularly and lawfully employed during part of the day in any useful employment or service, which subjects shall be supplementary to the practical work carried on in such employment or service.

It would probably be agreed without question that a continuation school class might be organized for a group of boys employed in a pottery, in which class the subjects of instruction might properly include the physics and chemistry related to the mixing, firing, and glazing of clay, etc.; industrial geography, dealing with the distribution of deposits of clay of suitable working qualities, and other materials required in the industry; and so on. The department of public instruction in the state in question has ruled, also, that the community would be justified in adding a certain amount of work intended to develop ideals of good citizenship, and the class would still be entitled to receive special state aid under the law. Similar examples might be suggested for groups of boys, or girls, employed in other industries.

Instruction Supplementary to an Unskilled Occupation In certain industries which might be named it is a comparatively simple matter to suggest fields of related subject matter that would afford a proper basis for the kind of school work that the law evidently contemplates. But when it comes to a consideration of the occupation of driving a grocer's

delivery wagon it is not so easy to plan industrial subjects of instruction that shall be "supplementary to the practical work carried on in such employment." The technical and intellectual content of such an occupation is so meager that it is difficult to make real (not adventitious) connection with organized knowledge. It may or may not be a good thing for a boy to spend some time in one of the occupations mentioned. It may or may not be a good thing to attempt to plan courses of study that shall stimulate a boy to improve himself as a worker in such occupation. It may or may not be a good thing to try to make a boy proficient in one occupation while he is actually at work in another. But, whatever the decisions reached on these points, an examination of the situation seems to indicate that there is practically nothing that can be offered in the case referred to that would be entitled to special state aid under the law. Consider the following points:

1. It is necessary in the interpretation and exposition of the law to be guided by the specific intent and purpose of the law, rather than by a consideration of the general educational or social desirability of any given line of work which might be proposed.

2. The law provides for certain kinds of work. By omitting certain other forms of vocational education (commercial education, for example) the law seems so much the more to emphasize the fact that it has made a *selection* of lines of work to be fostered.

3. The principle seems to be clearly established of training for increased efficiency of individuals in the callings *in which they are employed*. However unsatisfying or displeasing it may be, the situation seems to demand the interpretation that the law does not contemplate the training for increased efficiency in one calling of individuals who are actually employed in another.

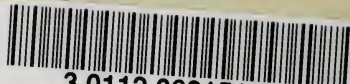
4. It is probably well that the law does not at present provide for the training for increased efficiency in one calling of individuals who are employed in another, for the reason that such a policy would tremendously increase the complexity of the problem and extend unduly the scope of the activities of the state department of education. It is much more reasonable to proceed on the simpler basis at first, and to take up the greater and more complex task after the necessary skill and knowledge have been acquired and the necessary administrative machinery set up and tested. It would seem that after some understanding of the problems of, and some facility in the administration of, continuation school training in what might be called longitudinal straight lines of

effort had been gained, there would be time enough to undertake the solution of the problems of "cross education."

5. Finally, the instruction that would be suitable for the 14 to 16 years old boys engaged in the miscellaneous employments in the case referred to must be classified as *prevocational work*. It is, then, simply a question as to whether the law provides state aid for prevocational work, or whether it assumes that for the present at least this must be regarded as the legitimate responsibility of the existing school system.

It is not at all unlikely that the intensive study of some of these administrative problems, compelled by the very nature of the new work, will lead to intelligent revision and practical amendment of the laws.

—WILLIAM T. BAWDEN.



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